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# Membership of Land Use Planning Committees

LAND USE planning is a broadening of democracy in agriculture, to make possible wider group action on farm problems. To make this effective, the views of farmers in each area must be presented by committees that actually represent farmers in the area.

The national land use planning activity depends upon farmers participating in planning work in communities and counties of every State. Community committees are the cornerstone of the planning organization, and farm men and women usually constitute their entire membership. Each county committee consists of at least 10 farm people and the several State and Federal officials in the county who are responsible for administering action programs for agriculture.

Farmers are in the majority on county committees. Farm people also have strong representation on State land use planning committees with at least one farmer member representing each type-of-farming area in the State. Farm men and women work side by side on most community, county, and State land use planning committees.

In this work, farmers are contributing freely of their experience and knowledge about local conditions and problems. Hence, their judgments are carrying increasing weight in determining land use adjustment goals for each community.

The type of membership and the methods used in selecting members of land use planning committees vary from county to county. Such a planning organization is flexible enough to function under different conditions in thousands of communities. It is fundamental, however, that the work of committees should adequately represent the attitudes, opinions, and judgments of all farm people in all communities.

It is true, of course, that many planning committees are not yet fully representative of the people they are expected to serve. This may often be the case when new committees

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are being organized and the work is just starting. But it does not relieve these committees of the responsibility for so improving their organization that full representation will be attained.

### **Representativeness is Key to Planning.**

Representativeness is the key to effectiveness in a land use planning committee. Committee membership should represent accurately the entire community, county, or State, not just one part of it.

All farmers cannot attend the meetings of their community, county, or State committees, nor is that necessary. It is vitally important, however, that all farmers be represented in the membership of the committee and that they look upon the committee's recommendations as their own. The committee, in other words, must actually be representative of all the farm people in the area.

Representative membership on county and State land use planning committees follows almost automatically when the community planning committees fully represent the people in their communities. The community committees are the foundation on which all planning rests. Because this is true, the type of representation obtained in community committees is reflected in the membership of county and State committees.

Within most community boundaries there are varying interests and significant groups of people. They may be small neighborhoods, or they may be racial groups or groups of landowners, tenants, or sharecroppers. Each group has its own outlook, its own land use problems, and its special contributions to make toward the development of land use plans and action programs. The problem is to bring all the views of these groups into recommendations approved by all.

### **Group Interests Important Factor.**

In the county committees there is likely to be little difficulty in obtaining representative action if adequate attention has been given to group interests in the community committees. When the community committees are adequately represented on the county committees, and when those representatives are chosen by the full voice of a well-rounded community committee, the conclusions of the county land use planning committee will be as nearly representative of farmer interests and attitudes as could be hoped for.

In practice this type of representativeness is made much more effective through a continual interchange of ideas and opinions between the county and community committees.

In this way, each group in the county and community can have full opportunity to make its attitudes and opinions known. The net result is the drawing up of plans and recommendations that are understood and approved by everybody in the community and that will lead to action that benefits everybody.

The work of land use planning committees takes into account the needs and views of minorities as well as majorities. Recommendations are not decided simply by elections, where the members vote for or against issues. When a committee is trying to deal with difficult economic problems, it cannot just vote "yes" or "no" and expect the problem to be solved by the vote.

### **Ideas Exchanged in Discussions.**

Recommendations and plans are made cooperatively by farmers, administrators, and technicians. They produce a lot of discussion and exchange of ideas between the individual members of the committee, as well as between the committee and the people out in the communities who are not serving on the committee.

Thus representativeness involves a good deal of give and take, a good deal of sympathetic listening to the other fellow's ideas, and a good deal of patience in trying to get together with him on something everybody can agree upon. Different people often hold different opinions and attitudes on details of the same question and therefore will need to arrive at compromise views acceptable to all before joint action or recommendations can be had.

So the matter of making the committees' plans represent accurately common judgments as to causes of problems and best measures for adjustment involves adequate presentation of all sides of questions under consideration. To accomplish this it is necessary that each geographic group in the community participate in the membership of community committees, or have representation on it.

The first job in organizing a representative land use planning committee is to recognize the significant characteristics of both the land and the people in the community. Differences in economic status of people often make important differences in their outlook.

### **Three Items: Society, Geography, and Race.**

Social groups, geographic groups, racial groups, and others must be recognized, too, for they each make significant contributions to community opinions. Recognition of social groups means recognizing people in various parts of the county



who have customs and traditions that vary from those of people in other parts. National origins, length of residence, and family relationships are often definite social considerations.

These differences may be associated with the kind of land the people live on, or with the races to which they belong. Wherever groups are different, land use planning committees have learned it is well to take these differences into account. Having really representative membership on community committees has proved repeatedly to be the best way of accomplishing this, for many such groups exist in definite community forms.

Two or more definite racial groups live side by side in some areas. In these instances representative planning calls for participation by each group, because, by reason of the different points of view they sometimes hold on matters of community interest, they have real contributions to make to any decisions that apply to all. This is the road to understanding, and understanding is necessary between groups before they can cooperate effectively.

### **Different Areas with Different Views.**

Frequently, too, there will be striking geographical differences within a county or area, and in such cases it is important that the views of people in the different areas be fully represented in all the plans made by the county committee.

The community committees that serve these different types of areas and communities are again the usual place where community differences in viewpoints can be seen most clearly. For instance, if part of the county is forest and hill land, and part of it is lowland and farming country, the chances are that people in the two areas belong to separate hill-land and lowland communities.

Through their community committees the people in each part of the area can give full expression to their views. Sometimes, of course, the differences in interests and attitudes are not so definite as those between the hill country and lowlands. Nevertheless, in all cases it is worth while to make a special effort to insure that the committee be representative and consequently reflect closely whatever differences do exist.

This is not done simply as a matter of fairness and justice but because the committees have found that their recommendations are much more practical, more complete, and more intelligent when the judgments of all these groups have been pooled.

This is the approach that has been found most successful in obtaining the right kind of planning and in creating a proper basis for action. Recommendations that include the contributions of all economic, social, racial, and geographic groups naturally draw on wider sources of experience and information than those that ignore the opinions of some of these groups and thus are easier to obtain action upon.

### **Dependence of Farm and Town on Each Other.**

The extent to which interests outside agriculture are concerned in the work of the committee is another consideration involved in land use planning. Rural communities are likely to center around and include the nearby towns or villages where commercial and business interests are located. In these cases, there may be no line that separates the town and country into different communities, for they are part of a joint community.

This is reflected in the fact that in many agricultural communities the local bankers and merchants, for instance, are very much interested in the state of agriculture and, in turn, farmers are interested in the bankers and merchants as sources of credit and supplies. Recognizing the kinship of interest between town and country in this type of community, many county committees confer on occasion with businessmen and others in the community, in order that the knowledge and ideas of these people may be represented in the planning process.

A planning committee should endeavor to keep any one interest or group in the community from having a disproportionate influence upon the committee's recommendations and plans. It is considered essential that full consideration be given to the views of minorities, as all groups are in a very real sense dependent on each other for continuing cooperation in the joint task of planning.

This concern, in some cases, is directed at seeing that those in the community who are well off do not forget the needs of those less well off. In other cases racial factors are involved. These vary in character from community to community, but in all it has been found highly important that everybody's views be presented. Increasingly it is seen that the welfare of the community is bound up in the welfare of each individual who lives there. To the extent that anyone living in a community earns less than a fair living or is given less than a fair voice in matters of joint concern, everyone in the community is a little worse off than he would be otherwise.

## **Greater Interest Brings Action.**

Just as town and country, and agriculture and industry, are dependent on each other, so is everyone in the community and county dependent to some extent on everyone else. For this reason, land use planning committees find it necessary to give expression to the views of all social, economic, and geographic groups in the county.

Representativeness in committee membership is valuable in a very practical way in obtaining the interest and cooperation of the people of the community or county. It is found that when the people of the community participate in making the committee's recommendations and understand the reasons for making them, the recommendations are not only sounder but have a greater degree of community interest behind them. Active community interest in land use planning work is, of course, the best insurance possible that effective action will be taken.

Many steps that land use planning committees have suggested do not call for action by any agency of the State or national governments, or even by the county or township governments. In such cases the committees have proposed that the people themselves act directly to improve some local condition, and the local people had to pitch in and work together to make the committees' recommendation result in real action. The importance of widespread community interest is apparent at once in matters for direct action, but it is fully as important in matters that concern public agencies.

When a public agency is asked to do something, in the long run that agency can do little unless the request that is made has the backing of the mass of the people in the county or community. In the long run the agency must depend on the people arriving at plans that are made cooperatively and that are sound and have the support of everybody concerned. An important aspect of the matter is that people generally are much more willing to approve suggestions and to work to get them in practice when they have taken a part in formulating them.

## **All Groups Share In Planning.**

It follows from this that the more adequately the committee findings represent the views of all the people in their county or communities, the more the people of different groups feel they have a share in the planning work. If their customs or attitudes are taken into account in shaping suggestions of the committee, for example, certainly they are justified in feeling they have a part in formulating the suggestions.



This feeling is useful in itself, for it promotes activity of interest in all phases of planning. Added interest in planning, in turn, leads to closer study of problems and to a better understanding of the reasons behind the recommendations. This means a great deal to the success of any kind of planning work, it has been discovered, because the more people understand about problems and ways of trying to solve them, the closer the community or county can come to dealing successfully with its problems.

As an aid in creating this type of understanding, some committees are making a practice of holding public discussions at which members of the committees outline the problems of their counties and communities. Meetings of this kind, whether they are large or small, have proved to be far more successful when the discussion has brought out the views of all the groups in the county or community, which again emphasizes the need for representativeness in planning.

How to make sure that committee membership represents the different groups in the community is an important question. In fact, experience indicates that there is no sure-fire, absolutely certain way of getting committee members who can be regarded as spokesmen for the various groups. But if an attempt is made to do this, and if the goal of making the committees fully representative is kept clearly in mind, a large measure of success is usually achieved.

### **Ways of Selecting Members of Committees.**

Counties are finding it desirable to have many of their people actually take part in land use planning. Although it often is not desirable to have a large turn-over in experienced committee membership, opportunity for widespread participation in planning is frequently given in the work of numerous subcommittees, in investigating such matters as taxation, tenancy, roads, credit, and marketing.

The most democratic method possible is proving best for the selection of members on land use planning committees, and in every case it is expected that eventually all committees will be chosen by elective methods. This type of selection, it is found, has resulted in a greater feeling by people in the communities and counties that the members of committees actually represent them and are responsible to them for the development of workable plans leading to action.

Below are listed some of the methods that have been found effective in the formation of land use planning committees.

### *Elective Methods*

#### A. Election of community committees:

- (1) Each community, in open meeting or by mail ballot, elects a community committee, preferably with one representative from each of the smaller neighborhood groups in the county.

#### B. Election of county committees:

- (1) The community committee elected chooses, by vote, one of its farmer members to serve on the county land use planning committee.
- (2) Each community, in open meeting or by mail ballot, elects directly one of its farmers to represent it on the county committee.

### *Appointive Methods*

This method has been found useful in setting up a new committee. Such a committee is designed to serve on a temporary basis and only until such time as the committee can begin to function and elections can be held. Under this procedure one of several alternatives is followed:

- (1) The county agent selects the farmer members of the county land use planning committee, subject to the approval of local representatives of action agencies who are serving as ex officio members of the county committee; or,
- (2) The county agent selects the farmer members from a panel nominated by the other members; or,
- (3) Each nonfarmer member selects one farmer member, and additional farmers are selected by the county agent to insure that all important groups are represented; or
- (4) The nonfarmer members jointly select the farmer members.